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CLASSIFIED

CITE: 00321

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FROM: GENERAL WESTMORELAND

TO : ADMIRAL SHARP, CINCPAC

: GENERAL WHEELER, CJCS

08 JANUARY 1968

DECLASSIFIED

SEC/ARMY TAG 830024

DCW 5-17-90

AS YOU KNOW, THE ENEMY HAS MODERNIZED AND INCREASED THE FIRE POWER OF HIS FORCES IN SVN AND BORDER AREAS. THIS IN TURN HAS INCREASED HIS LOGISTIC REQUIREMENTS WHICH IN THE MAIN HAVE BEEN FLOWING THRU LAOS. THE GREAT INCREASE IN TRUCK TRAFFIC DURING THE PAST FEW MONTHS INDICATES HIS ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE THE MUNITIONS FOR PRESENT STEPPED UP OPERATIONS AND PROBABLY TO STOCKPILE SUFFICIENTLY TO COVER THE PERIOD OF THE NEXT WET SEASON.

LOOKING FORWARD TO FUTURE OPERATIONS, I BELIEVE THE ONLY COMPLETELY EFFECTIVE METHOD OF INTERDICTING ENEMY MOVEMENT THROUGH LAOS, IS TO DEPLOY FORCES INTO LAOS, TO CUT OFF THE ENEMY'S ACCESS TO THE SOUTH. OPLAN FULL CRY, FORWARDED TO YOU LAST JANUARY, HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND I CONSIDER IT NO LONGER VALID IN VIEW OF THE CHANGED SITUATION. ACCORDINGLY, I HAVE DIRECTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW CONCEPT FOR OPERATIONS, "EL PASO," A CORPS SIZE OPERATION ASTRIDE THE MOST CRITICAL CHOKE POINTS IN VICINITY OF HIGHWAY 9 TO BLOCK ENEMY TROOP AND LOGISTIC MOVEMENT THRU LAOS DURING THE NEXT DRY SEASON IN THE LAO PAN HANDLE. THIS PLAN IS BEING PREPARED BY USARV, SUPPORTED BY 7TH AF AND III MAF, UNDER MY CONCEPTUAL GUIDANCE. A PLANNING DATE FOR D-DAY IS 1 OCT 68, HOWEVER, THE ACTUAL DATE WILL DEPEND UPON THE BEGINNING OF THE DRY SEASON. FORCES CONTEMPLATED ARE 1ST CAV DIV (AM),

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101ST ABN DIV AND THE ARVN ABN DIV. A PROVISIONAL CORPS HEADQUARTERS WILL BE ESTABLISHED USING RESOURCES OF HEADQUARTERS IFFV. CONTROL OF OPERATIONS IN II CTZ WILL BE GIVEN TO 4TH DIV HEADQUARTERS (AUGMENTED). THE WITHDRAWAL OF THESE FORCES BACK TO SVN WOULD DEPEND ON THE SITUATION. ONE POSSIBILITY IS TO WITHDRAW SOUTH BY HO CHI MINH TRAIL TO DESTROY ENEMY LOGISTIC STOCKS AND ENTER SVN IN KONTUM PLEIKU AREA.

WITHIN THE TIME FRAME ENVISIONED, ALL PROGRAM 5 FORCES WILL BE IN COUNTRY AND OPERATIONAL. RVNAF WILL BE EQUIPPED TO A GREAT EXTENT WITH MODERN WEAPONS, ITS PERFORMANCE GREATLY IMPROVED AND RF/PF FORCES SHOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE. LOGISTIC FORCES OF FREE WORLD AND RVNAF WILL HAVE A GREATER CAPABILITY FOR SUSTAINED SUPPORT AND MORE HIGHWAYS AND WATERWAYS SHOULD BE OPEN TO RELIEVE AIR LIFT CAPABILITY FROM ROUTINE SUPPLY. LOGISTICS SUPPORT OF THE OPERATION WILL BE BY HIGHWAY 9, SECURED BY III MAF, AS WELL AS BY AIRLIFT AND AIR DROP INTO LAOS. NEW C-130 AIRFIELDS AT QUANG TRI AND KHE SANH, IMPROVED PORT FACILITIES AT DONG HA, CUA VIET AND THE NEW PORT COMPLEX AT HUE/PHU BAI WILL ENHANCE LOGISTIC SUPPORT OPERATIONS THRU I CORPS AREA. HIGHWAY 9 TO KHE SANH WILL BE ESTABLISHED AS AN ALL WEATHER ROAD. I BELIEVE THE CONCEPT IS FEASIBLE FROM BOTH THE FORCE AVAILABILITY AND THE LOGISTIC STANDPOINT. IN THE TIME FRAME INVOLVED, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT A CONTINGENCY PLAN BE AVAILABLE AS AN OPTION TO OTHER ACTION THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED AT THAT TIME.

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